ICH WILL! **(I WANT!)** sounds like a call to arms for a children's revolution. In the context of Hitler's Boy Scouts, it asserts expectations of an inheritance no previous generation of German youth had ever dared demand. The title of avant-garde filmmaker Kenneth Anger's new work, which made its debut at the Donau Festival in Krems, Austria, this past spring, *ICH WILL!* appears superimposed on footage of a Hitlerjugend rally in Landsberg, Bavaria, in the late 1930s, and echoes the fiery letters heralding the demonic invocation in F. W. Murnau's *Faust* (1926). The self-sacrificing pact between the youth of Germany and their führer is dramatized in Anger's astonishing montage of propaganda films, newsreels, and vintage home movies that he assembled over the past decade. The Hitler Youth, marching toward a future that belongs to them, arrive at a rally that looks like the world's end. Their choreographed movement becomes more and more like a somnambulistic rite, and their torches and flags decorate the town of Landsberg in an infernal red. The legacy of the Hitler Youth as Nazi malfeasants, however, sits uneasily with their representation in the historical footage that Anger marshals here. The tradition of demonic chiaroscuro that Lotte H. Eisner celebrated in Murnau's *Faust* is at odds with much archival film from Nazi Germany, and the images in *Ich Will!* of sports, folk dancing, hiking, and camping are deceptively life-affirming and belie the Hitler Youth's ultimate purpose as child soldiers for a murderous ideology.

While Anger includes no footage of Nazi atrocities, he structures the archival materials to emphasize the Hitler Youth's romantically macabre ethos. Like his legendary films *Scorpio Rising* (1963) and *Invocation of My Demon Brother* (1969), *Ich Will!* has a ritualistic structure, but the gathering of Hitler Youth formations does not "run wild" in Anger's edit. While their energy is contained in the mass rally presided over by Hitler, a lurid red tint haunts the screen in the subsequent climactic sequences, signing the violence latent throughout.

Near the start of *Ich Will!* Anger cuts in footage of a dedication ceremony on the Baltic island of Rügen. Hitler Youth emerge from the tomb of Hans Mallon, a Nazi teen martyred by the Communists in 1931. A runic inscription above the tomb reads THE FAME OF THE DEAD LIVES FOREVER, a phrase that, for some, will sound a disturbing echo of Aleister Crowley's pronouncement that "every man and every woman is a star," with which Anger prefaced his 1959 catalogue of scandal, *Hollywood Babylon*. Both sentences reflect the enduring fascination with fame and infamy that is central to all of Anger's work. In the context of his *Mouse Heaven* (2004), a romp through the world's largest collection of Mickey Mouse memorabilia, and *My Surfing Lucifer* (2007), a film on champion surfer and drug casualty Bunker Spreckels, *Ich Will!* evokes an extreme brand of infamy. Today the Hitler Youth are recognized as misguided child warriors whose inheritance—a life span far shorter than their parents'—is inextricably linked to Nazi mass murder and genocide. By foregrounding historical footage in his conjuring of childhood in the Third Reich, Anger presents a dialectical vision, linking the Nazi abyss with monstrous imaginings of evil while acknowledging the "ordinariness," even innocence, that the Hitler Youth often brought to their macabre training.

—THOMAS EATON

1000 WORDS

Kenneth Anger

TALKS ABOUT *ICH WILL!*, 2008

MY FILM IS A POETIC, IRONIC REVERIE on the Hitler Youth in which I make a parallel with the Wandervogel movement that preceded it. *Ich Will!* is deliberately not a documentary but a visual poem, for which I conducted research for ten years in the historical archives of Europe and North America, ultimately choosing footage shot between 1933 and 1938. I built up my assemblage from various Hitler Youth propaganda films and amateur shorts, additionally taking several sequences from the propaganda feature *Hitlerjunge Quex* (Hitler Youth Quex, 1933), notably the rally around the flag observed by Quex through the trees. There were a multitude of cameras rolling in Nazi Germany, filming just about everything, and often the people behind the cameras didn't quite know what they were filming. A poignant moment in *Ich Will!* is when a Hitler Youth glances at the camera and we are uncertain what constitutes the history. It seems as if the Nazis left the footage in by mistake. But I think it could be revealing of a secret love of some kind.

Kenneth Anger, publicity poster for *Ich Will!*, 2008.

The scenes that follow the dedication ceremony near the beginning of my film show Nazis molding their youth through male bonding. The Hitler Youth copied earlier youth movements like the Wandervogel, and the most affecting footage is of the Hitler Youth camping in the forest, hiking, and marching together. *Ich Will!* demonstrates the power of male bonding as the glue that makes any militant men's community work. I was a close friend of the famous sex scientist Dr. Alfred Kinsey, and he told me that latent homosexuality was a potent dynamic in the armed services. The testosterone bubbling just beneath the surface fuels the ferocity of warriors because it is not expressed. In the case of the Hitler Youth, it drove them on to their doom.

The Nazi machine lasted barely twelve years, and all the clips in my film originate from before World War II. I have tinted this footage in a sepia light, except for the shots of a Nazi Youth rally in Landsberg, which is near Munich. The old fortress at Landsberg was sacred ground for the Nazis, as it was the prison where Adolf Hitler dictated *Mein Kampf* in 1924. I chose an infernal, bloodred tint for that night rally, in which thousands of Hitler Youth served as decorative torchbearers, thinking of D. W. Griffith, who used red tint for the storming of Babylon in *Intolerance* (1916). I also had Henry Otto's *Dante's Inferno* (1924) and Abel Gance's *Napoleon* (1927) in mind.

Somehow, color can make all the difference in bringing the past to us in a more immediate way. The warm brown of the Hitler Youth uniforms and the blazing red and black swastika banners were designed to exploit the colors' attention-grabbing psychological action so essential to Nazi pageantry. For a long time the Third Reich existed only in black and white. Disturbing as those images are, they somehow distanced events from us, whereas color suggests immediacy, even intimacy. The accursed history of the Third Reich was, after all, recent history. All of Germany was a stage for Adolf Hitler, a master manipulator who made use of many ancient and sacred symbols, from the swastika to the runic flash of lightning that was the Hitler Youth emblem. The rally he oversees in *Ich Will!* and then leaves in his magnificent Mercedes would have been impossible without the then-recent invention and perfection of microphones and loudspeakers that allowed every word of Hitler's harsh rant to be heard by the huge crowd. The event was broadcast in Germany and Fascist Italy and could be picked up by shortwave radio in England and across Europe. In 1936, Leni Riefenstahl almost shot *Olympia* (1938) in color. Color film in both 35-mm and 16-mm formats was available from Agfa at the time, but Riefenstahl was concerned about chemical instability since the stock was so new and untested, with variations in scale from one batch to the next. In *Ich Will!* I have included brief flashes of Agfacolor for shock, to remind my audience that, yes, these madmen were made of pink flesh and blood. The red autocar is my favorite stroke here!

A poignant moment in *Ich Will!* is when a Hitler Youth glances at the camera. It seems as if the Nazis left the footage in by mistake. But I think it could be revealing of a secret love of some kind.

When I was a very young child in 1930s Hollywood, my grandmother read *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to me. She took me to a performance of Max Reinhardt's outdoor spectacle of the play staged in the Hollywood Bowl, with the "bowl" rolled away and the hills behind teeming with hundreds of choristers who marched down toward the stage with torches. The Nazis stole some of Reinhardt's spectacular effects. So from an early age Shakespeare has always been with me, particularly after my grandmother, who knew Reinhardt from Vienna, obtained for me the tiny nonspeaking part of the Changeling in the Warner Brothers filming of the play. It accounts for my later use of the name Puck Film Productions and especially the use of a quote from *The Tempest* as a kind of epigraph to *Ich Will!*

Ich Will! premiered at the end of April 2008 in the lovely river town of Krems, Austria, thirty miles from Vienna, under the auspices of the Donau Festival. I could never have made the film without the festival's financial support, which allowed me to rent a professional cutting room at the old Columbia studios, now the Sunset Gower Studios in Los Angeles. I am sensitive to ghosts, and the old studio is haunted by Frank Capra, the midget cast of *The Terror of Tiny Town* (1938), and the lovely wraith of Rita Hayworth in all her Technicolor glory in *Cover Girl* (1944).

Hitler committed suicide on Walpurgis Night 1945, and when Radio Hamburg announced his death they played a slow movement from Bruckner's Seventh Symphony. Bruckner was Hitler's favorite symphonist, and the music I selected for *Ich Will!* is the composer's final work, written when he was very ill, with the knowledge that he was dying. Part One of *Ich Will!*—which debuted in Krems on Walpurgis Night sixty-three years after Hitler's death—utilizes the symphony's first two movements. *Ich Will!* Part Two, which I haven't shown to anyone yet, uses the third movement. The second part of the film, titled *Und Du?*, will be screened in 2009, on the vernal equinox. □